

The Book of Common Prayer
our Common Heritage.

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The Common Prayer
The Common Liturgy

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER OUR COMMON HERITAGE.

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The Book of Common Prayer fills a very large space in the service of the Episcopal church. In it the creed, the polity, and the worship of that great church find their expression, and very life. Even as such the history of the Book is worthy of any scholar's thorough search, of every Christian's understanding and of the admiration of all lovers of best literature. We may not be able to say with Froude the historian: "The beautiful roll of its language mingles with the memories of childhood; it is the guide of our dawning thought, and accompanies us through each stage of life with its chaste ceremonials from the font to the edge of the grave." But as scholars we all can say with him: "Next to the Bible, there are few things which have affected the character of the modern English more deeply than the Liturgy."

But the Book has a much broader claim than even this suggests. The Prayer Book is a history of Christianity. In it is to be found the faith of the church, its song, worship, struggles, earthly failures, its heavenly aspirations and attainments. The Book is the product of every Christian age, and Christian people, Reformers and Puritans, Presbyterians and Lutherans, as well as Romanists and Churchmen, have built into the massive structure corner stones and towering columns, and have bound its walls and towers with mortar mixed with the tears and blood of a common martyrdom. As such the Prayer Book challenges the profoundest interest of all Christians.

I have before me a copy of the Book of Common Prayer. What is it historically? This is the question that I would answer. As we carefully and reverently turn its pages we notice how very much of the Book is taken from the Service-Book or Breviary or Missal, of what we call the Roman church. In the two books, that used today in the Catholic church and that used in the Episcopal church, we find far more sameness than difference; just as, but not to an equal degree, we find a likeness between our authorized Protestant Bible and the Douay, the Romish Bible.

When Christianity was set up among our forefathers in ancient Britain, worshipers of the sun-god and the serpent's egg, some parts of the service found alike in the church book of both the Roman and the English worship of today, were recited by these

Christian missionaries in the ears of these awe-struck idolators. Many of the psalms, hymns and canticles were sung, some of them at midnight, some at early morning, and again at evening twilight, in the first osier-built churches, the same psalms and hymns and canticles which are now repeated day by day or week by week under the groined roofs of Roman and Episcopal cathedrals or in the humble churches. And when the British race and Christianity were trodden out under the feet of Saxon heathen, the new religion found shelter for its faith and for its followers in the wild districts of Wales and Cornwall and among the Scottish Hebrides and in Ireland, still singing its one unbroken psalm and canticle, and uttering its unending prayer.

It was the dream of Pope Gregory to reconquer the British Islands for the cross. When in almost the last year of the sixth century Augustine and his group of robed priests and choristers landed in England the stately ritual of the ancient church was observed, the Kyrie Eleison, the Te Deum and the Gloria were sung, and the Apostles' and Nicene creeds were repeated, and the prayers of Gelasius and Chrysostom and the Litany were recited, in much of the same majestic words and utterance as we may hear them today.

As the centuries rolled on, bringing with them in God's own slow but sure way the great revolutions in kingdoms and the greater reformations in the church, the ancient order of worship with all the alterations and additions which had been made in it remained as yet untouched by the reforming spirit. Luther with his re-discovery of the Hebrew prophet's doctrine of the life of faith, shattered the walls of the vast fabric of the Roman church. Learning in universities and schools and household studies, and rude, plain preaching by road-side and in market places, and, mightier than all, the Word of God translated into the mother tongue of the people, and now for the first time working in their souls; these like celestial lights were exposing to the people's gaze the festering corruptions, the vast usurpations, and the all-crushing tyrannies of the ecclesiastical power which was over them, and all around them, and even in them.

The king of England, Henry the VIII, chafing under the despotism of the Pope, as a rival of his own despotism, longing too for largest liberty for his lust, touched too, no doubt with a noble national spirit, severed throne and kingdom and church from all allegiance to the Pope at Rome. And yet despite all these forces

of revolution without, and the even more powerful forces of evolution from within, the ancient ritual of service, both that of the primitive and pure faith and practice of the church, and the accretions of corruption and superstition and falsity which had been gathered through centuries remained really unchanged. The old Prayer Book continued to be used under the reign of this first Protestant king. In the chamber of his last sickness the Mass was daily said; at his funeral Mary the Mother of God and all the saints were duly invoked, and the hand that in the engraved title-page of the translated Bible is shown as delivering the free Word of God to his lords, signed a will by which six hundred pounds annually were to be given to priests to say mass for his soul every day, and for four abuits, each year, whatever these last may be. Doubtless this first of Protestant sovereigns and "Defender of the Faith" needed these last. This was four and a half centuries ago.

And now came on the stage one of those phenomenal personages which the ever wakeful providence of God fashions, whose career however brief was so potent in character as to change all the successive acts in the mighty drama that followed. On the death of Henry VIII, Edward, his son by the best loved of his many wives, Jane Seymour, became Edward VI, King of England. He was a mere boy in age, of only nine years, but his learning was marvelous, and his piety deep, and most serious, and his will to give free scope to the reformed religion throughout every part of the church and kingdom was all dominant. His reign was short, only for six years, but in it, this really first Protestant king wrought a revolution in spiritual affairs and reconstructed, or perhaps more truly constructed the church of England.

One of the very first acts of this Christian prince, was to strike from the Church Book the whole service of the *Mass*. The Eucharist became at once a communion instead of a sacrifice and for the first time the sacrament in both kinds was presented to the people.

This first Book of Common Prayer was followed by a second in the short reign of this illustrious Christian king, in which the spirit of the Reformation found fuller sway. The first book, that of 1549, shows the separation that had taken place from the Romish phase of Christianity, and the second book, that of 1552, shows the separation that had taken place from the Lutheran phase

Both were for the establishment of the doctrine of the Eucharist as a communion and not a sacrifice.

The new Book of Common Prayer as we compare it with the Roman Breviary and Missal which had been in use for so many centuries, and which were in use even in the English church under Henry VIII, the new book of Edward's reign (I refer to the Prayer Book of 1552), and of every subsequent reign since, and here in America, to-day, what is this "Book of Common Prayer"? where are its sources? My first answer is: In the ancient church what we may call in distinction from the Romish church, the primitive church. The English Prayer Book was not a new book, but a revision of the old book. It was an excision of the corruptions, and superstitions, and mummeries and idolatries which through the mediaeval period had been gathered into the old book of worship, its form and rites and prayers. So looking at this Prayer Book we find it in the main, made up of the Te Deum of St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, Hilary, one or all of them; the creeds of Rufinus and Athanasius, the Gloria in Excelsis of the Eastern church, the Gloria Patri of the Western, the prayers and collects of Gelasius, of Chrysostom, of Gregory and Leo, the Litany, the Vinite, the Magnificat, the Kyrie Eleison, all and more of like kind which were in use in the church of Christ, before the year 600, when as yet faith was simple and clear-eyed, and love was deep and fervid, and Christian life was pure and all-convincing.

But this Prayer Book of Edward is not only a retainment of the primitive forms and an elimination of the mediaeval, it is also an addition, an altogether new expression of worship. There are Introductions, and Exhortations, and Confessions and Thanksgiving and Absolution, the distinctive products of the great Reformation. Whence came these? These form a very great part of all that is really new in the Book of Common Prayer. Doubtless Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of the English church, had much to do both by his sympathy with the Reformation and his superb literary taste, in moulding the new book into its ampler proportions and its most beautiful expressions. But no greater mistake can be committed than to suppose that the distinctive parts of the English Prayer Book are to be attributed to Cranmer or to any other or others in the English church. Dr. Cardwell, an Episcopal authority, in his work on the "Two Books of Common Prayer," states that "the new liturgy was greatly

indebted, wherever it deviated from the ancient breviaries to the progress already made on the continent in the reformation of worship," and this author also calls attention to the intimate correspondence upon the subject of the reformed liturgy between the great leaders in the English church, and the reformers of Zurich. Cranmer invited and welcomed to England, John a. Lasco, Polianus, Bucer, Peter Martyr, Fagius and others. Martyr took up his residence at Lambert, the palace of the archbishop and became King's professor of Theology at Oxford. Pollanus was Calvin's successor at Strasburg and brought with him to England a liturgy which he used for his own congregation, that by special invitation was wont to gather in the great cathedral at Glastonbury. What part this follower of Calvin contributed to the English Prayer Book will shortly be stated. The distinguished Pole, a. Lasco, another disciple of Calvin, was placed over the foreign congregation of refugees in London. He had his liturgy. He was intimately associated with the Primate, was his guest and his adviser in the whole work of the English Reformation. And there was Bucer, one of the most learned men, of whom the Papal Legate Contarini said: " Martin Bucer, by reason of the wide extent of his learning, could single-handed have been a match for all our Roman Catholic doctors." He sought security by acceptance of Cranmer's invitation, in England and soon was named by the young king as Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. Of him, Dr. Dowden, the present bishop of Edinburgh, says: "There can be no question as to the influence Bucer exerted upon the construction of the first Prayer Book." Melancthon and Calvin were in close touch with all these workers at this new liturgy, both foreign and English. Heylin, a church historian, affirms, and it is repeated by Collier, that "the alterations made in these and other portions of the liturgy were owing to the remonstrances of Calvin, and the active co-operation of Martyr and Bucer." It is a curious statement made by a high churchman, Rev. Peter Hall, in his *Fragmenta Liturgica*. He says: "It appears that our English reformers intended to make the three or four first centuries the only pattern for themselves: and purposed to reform all the corrupt doctrines and practices of the Romish church, to make them agreeable to the practice of those first ages. But, alas! how soon were their pious and orthodox labors marred by the interference of Calvin, Bucer and other foreign Presbyterians." John a. Lasco in his dedication of his

book, published in 1555, gives an account of his call by King Edward VI. to England. He says that "the king wished him to freely regulate all things in his (a. Lasco's) churches wholly according to apostolic doctrine and practice without any regard to the rites of the country (England), that by this means the English churches also might be excited to embrace the apostolical doctrine and practice." Again, a. Lasco says: "The care of our church was committed to us chiefly with this view, that in the administration thereof, we should follow the rule of the divine word and apostolical observance rather than any rites of other churches. In fine we were admonished both by the king himself, and his chief nobility, to use this great liberality granted us in our ministry, rightly and faithfully, not to please men but for the glory of God, by promoting the reformation of his worship."

I will now particularize the greater features of the Prayer Book, so far as they are Protestant in origin. Beginning with the very beginning, Proctor, a vicar in the church of England, says: "The truth respecting the very appropriate opening of our service seems to be that the hint was taken from two books of service used by congregations of refugees in England, which were published about this time; the one being the version of Calvin's liturgy as translated by Pollanus, and the other that used by the Walloons under John a. Lasco." The idea of such a penitential introduction was due to Calvin. Archbishop Lawrence says in his Bampton lectures: "In 1552, when the liturgy was revised and republished, not only the Introduction but the Exhortation, the Confession and the Absolution were in some degree taken from Calvin's liturgy, but not from Calvin's own translation, but from that by Pollanus which was printed in England at the very period when the Prayer Book was under revision." Without doubt the liturgical form of the Absolution was largely shaped by that found in the liturgy of a. Lasco. And what have we left? I mean in that part of the Book of Common Prayer which is in use in the ordinary Lord's day service of the Episcopal church? What is there left? A great American scholar, who has passed into the Episcopal church, in a work to which he had given immense research and an eminently just and catholic spirit declares that in all this part of the Prayer Book "there is but a single prayer that can be traced to a distinctively Episcopal origin; and for the obvious reason, partly, that that service was framed before the assertion of Prelacy against Presbytery, and

also that its Protestant additions and emendations are almost exclusively from Calvinistic sources." I refer to Dr. Charles W. Shields of Princeton. This last year in the series of volumes known as the Oxford Library of Practical Theology, edited by Rev. W. C. E. Newbolt, canon of St. Paul's, and Rev. F. E. Brightman, librarian of the Pusey House, Oxford,—in this series there had just been published the "History of the Book of Common Prayer," by the Rev. Leighton Pullon, lecturer at St. John's Oriel and Queen's College. I find in it full confirmation of all that I have presented from other church writers concerning the large foreign sources which have created the Prayer Book. This author going further shows that most of the opening address of the marriage service, and the joining of the hands of the bride and bridegroom, and the declaration: 'Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder,' are taken from a Lutheran ritual." It is to the German, Hermann, the words: "Forasmuch as N. and M. have consented together," &c., are to be attributed. In the Baptismal service, much of the first address and the striking prayer and the choice of the gospel of St. Mark, and much of the brief exhortation, and those beautiful words: "Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe that He will embrace him with the arms of his mercy, that He will give him unto the blessing of eternal life, and make him a partaker of his everlasting life," and the prayer immediately following almost word for word, is owing to Luther. Some of the finest passages in the majestic burial service are traceable to the same source. This author calls us to notice "that under the Long parliament a Presbyterian form of prayer had been issued for the use of the navy, and this, he says, probably suggested the use of special forms of prayer for those at sea, when the church and king were restored."

A few days ago I received a copy of Bishop Dowden's book, published in 1899. The title of it is "The Workmanship of the Prayer Book. In it I find these words, "The church knows no parties. It is something to remember that the Prayer Book owes one of its chiefest treasures, the chastened ardor of the *General Thanksgiving* to the pen and the heart of the Puritan, Edward Reynolds." Dr. Reynolds was one of the most illustrious of the great Presbyterian divines who made up the Westminster Assembly. It was the pen of this distinguished Presbyterian that helped to shape those sentences in our Confession in respect to predestination and pre-

terition. Whatever we may say or even think of these fearful words, who among us will refuse to accompany me, with a pure heart and with bowed heads unto the throne of the heavenly grace as I repeat the great Presbyterian prayer, "the chiefest treasure in the Prayer Book": Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all Thy goodness and loving kindness to us, and to all men. We bless Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for Thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ: for the means of grace and for the hope of glory. And we beseech Thee, give us that due sense of all Thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may show forth Thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to Thy service, and by walking before Thee in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end.—Amen.

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